City of Tempe

Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Youth Town Hall Report

2009



Dear Mayor and City Council:

This has been another productive year for the Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission (MYAC). Activities organized by MYAC have allowed Tempe's youth to contribute their ideas and assist in the continued development of our city. We would like to thank you for your on-going support of our Commission and its projects.

The events sponsored by MYAC this year were very successful. Student Government Day emphasized the importance and effectiveness of community involvement. High school students were given the opportunity to experience first hand the inner workings of government by shadowing city officials and by participating in a mock City Council meeting.

Our annual Town Hall allowed youth and community leaders to exchange ideas on issues concerning youth. A summary of the dialogue that occurred and the recommendations made are detailed in this report. These recommendations are the original ideas of Tempe's youth to solve problems facing our community.

On behalf of the Commission I would like to thank you again for your dedication and commitment to the youth of Tempe. The successes we have had could not have been achieved without your support.

Sincerely,

Veekas Shrivastava, Chairperson Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission 2008/2009 Officers

Veekas Shrivastava Chairperson

> Jevin Hodge Vice Chairperson

Leslie Klein Administrative Recorder

> Rachel Saba Treasurer

Sachin Nair Student Government Day Chairperson

Katherine Brunty Youth Town Hall Chairperson

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> Vice Mayor Shana Ellis

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Tempe Youth Town Hall Chairperson's Report

Presented by

Katherine Brunty
Youth Town Hall Chairperson

March 19, 2009

The Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission sponsors Tempe's Youth Town Hall each year in order to bring together teens and adults from the community to discuss issues of concern to Tempe's youth and offer recommendations for practical solutions.

This was Tempe's twenty-ninth year to sponsor Youth Town Hall, which was held Wednesday, March 26, 2008 at the Westside Community Center. To ensure input from all sectors of our community, representatives from high schools, middle schools, service clubs, youth organizations, community centers, local businesses, the police department, and juvenile court were invited to participate.

Participants were divided into six discussion groups covering three topic areas. Two groups discussed **Teen Healthy Self Image** and two other groups discussed **School Transitions** and **Career Planning.** The remaining two groups addressed **Teen Prescription Drug Abuse.**

After enjoying welcoming comments by Mayor Hugh Hallman participants met in their groups. They began discussion of their assigned topics by defining the problem and possible contributing factors. Groups then made recommendations for solutions and focused on those that were practical and could be easily implemented. Youth spokespersons from each of the discussion groups presented their committee's recommendations to all Town Hall participants in the closing general session. These presentations gave those in attendance the opportunity to gain understanding and insight from one another.

The Youth Town Hall Report is available to various agencies, organizations, schools and service clubs for review and as a planning tool in our community. Youth Town Hall provides both teens and adults the opportunity to communicate openly with one another about important issues that affect them. It is hoped that Youth Town Hall will continue to be the model and success it has been in the past.

CITY OF TEMPE YOUTH TOWN HALL AGENDA

Thursday, March 19, 2009 Westside Community Center 715 West Fifth Street

8:15 - 8:45	Registration	Front of Westside Community Center Continental Breakfast provided
8:45 - 9:05	Opening Session Westside Community Center Gymnasium	
	Welcome -	Veekas Shrivastava, MYAC Chairperson
	Comments - Mayor	Hugh Hallman, City of Tempe
	Instructions - Kather	rine Brunty, Youth Town Hall Chairperson
9:10 – 11:45	<u>Committee Sessions</u> - Breaks will occur at the discretion of each committee.	
	<u>Committee A</u> - "Teen Healthy Self-Image - 1" Westside Community Center – Sunset Room	
	<u>Committee B</u> - "Teen Healthy Self-Image - 2" Westside Community Center – Riverside Room	
	Committee C - "School Transitions & Career Planning - 1" Westside Community Center – Los Vecinos Committee D - "School Transitions & Career Planning - 2" Westside Community Center – Computer Lab Committee E - "Teen Prescription Drug Abuse - 1" Westside Community Center – Lindon Park Room Committee F - "Teen Prescription Drug Abuse - 2" Westside Community Center – Art Room	
11:45 – 12:35		participants at the Westside Community Center Dilly's Deli
12:40 – 1:40	Committee Sessions Resume - Discussion Wrap-Up	
1:45 - 2:10	<u>Closing Session</u> – Westside Community Center Gymnasium	
	Committee Summaries Each committee representative will give a 3 to 5 minute summary.	
	Closing Remarks – Katherine Brunty, Town Hall Chairperson	

<u>Teen Healthy Self Image – 1</u>

Our discussion group began by discussing the background information provided on teen healthy self image and self esteem. They then defined healthy and negative self image. Factors contributing to healthy and negative self-esteem were also identified. The degree of parental involvement, the number of other people who care about them and positively influence them, and the availability of positive activities were identified as some variables impacting teens' self image. Our group then focused on some of the consequences of negative self image, which can include depression, substance abuse, anti-social behavior, harm to self and to others, and sexual activity. Last, we identified how to develop a healthy self image, available resources, and programs and services that are needed to promote healthy self image.

Recommendations:

1. Establish community based mentoring programs.

The teens in our group mentioned that just having an adult take interest in them boosts their morale and in turn helps improve their self image. However, often adults don't understand what teens are facing. A mentoring program that pairs teens with adults could be developed. The program would educate and inform adults on issues facing teens and also promote healthy adult/teen mentoring relationships.

2. Develop school-based peer leadership programs.

These programs would provide teens with confidential resources where they can discuss issues that are important to them. Students and teacher advisors at each school would be trained on a number of teen issues, referral procedures, and effective communication. Teens would be able to confidently contact peer leaders through a variety of outlets, including a phone number, texting, e-mail, Facebook, or in person.

3. Offer "Teen Retreats."

Teens selected from a number of different schools could plan small retreats around the city with assistance from adult advisors. The "retreats" would rotate in location. Bowling alleys, water parks, and city parks could all be venues. These retreats would promote mixing of "cliques" and get teens out of their comfort zones by giving them a chance to meet new people. The retreats would encourage self awareness and focus on building self-esteem.

4. Implement club fairs at schools.

These events would encourage teens to experience the different clubs and organizations present at their school. The fairs could be organized by the presidents of each club and held monthly. Booths or activities could be set up at lunch to give students the opportunity to learn about the clubs and organizations. The club fairs would give students the opportunity to become exposed to activities they may have been unaware of and to connect with others who have common interests.

Teen Healthy Self Image - 1

Facilitators: Matt Torres City of Tempe – Community Services

Leslie Klein Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Youth Participants

Dakota Austin
Chantinique Dancy
Ashley Donald
Dennis Hoang
Brianna Muñoz
Julia Soave

McKemy Middle School
Tempe High School
McClintock High School
Compadre High School
Kyrene Middle School

Christina Tate Corona del Sol High School
Ave Wright Escalante Teen Leadership

Adult Participants

Jill Dickey City of Tempe-Parks & Recreation

Luis MoralesChicanos Por La Causa, Inc.Bronwyn PaesCompadre High School-APPPJayson MatthewsTempe Community Council

Teen Healthy Self Image - 2

Discussion Summary:

Our discussion group began by reviewing the background information provided on teen body image and self esteem. Our group then discussed the meaning of healthy self image and influences that impact self image. Group members felt that many factors can contribute to a healthy self image, including peers, household setting, media, faith organizations, clubs, economic status, grades, success, teachers, counselors, positive opportunities, and positive people in their lives. They believed that parents have the greatest influence on self esteem. Our group then focused on how self image impacts behaviors. A negative self image can result in depression, promiscuous behavior, suicide, extreme dieting, losing friends, and failing in school. Youth participants identified that having a positive and healthy self image allows them to complete their goals, make new friends, explore new activities, make better choices, and respect and believe in themselves. The group felt that while risky behaviors such as drinking alcohol, experimenting with drugs, and sexual activity are always discussed in school self esteem and body image, which many times precedes risky behaviors, are rarely talked about.

Recommendations:

1. Create and maintain extra curricular activities that have low participation costs to students and families.

Extracurricular activities are extremely important at the elementary and middle school level. These activities place positive adult mentors in youths' lives, promote healthy self esteem, and build confidence. The City's Community Services and Parks and Recreation Departments could partner with the school districts to create and implement low cost extracurricular activities. Offering programs on school sites would allow greater youth participation by providing easy access to the programs.

2. Provide social service counselors on all middle school and high school campuses.

Full-time counselors on every campus would help prevent youth from developing image problems that could lead to risky behaviors, depression, or suicide. These counselors would focus on prevention and assistance and would also provide teacher trainings that focus teen self image and problem identification. Assistance through counselors and properly trained teachers would foster positive, healthy, and confident youth.

3. Maintain school resource officers on all Tempe Union High School District campuses in Tempe.

School resource officers help facilitate a safe environment for teens and through occasional instruction, reinforce life skills taught by teachers in the classroom.

4. Develop a "Peer to Peer" program for middle school students transitioning to high school.

The transition from middle to high school can be a time of stress and loss of self esteem for students. A peer mentor program utilizing excelling high school students could help ease the transition from 8th grade and assist with confidence building and maintaining a healthy self image.

5. Educate Tempe residents on school tax credit donations through the Tempe City water bill.

Increased donations to schools would provide potential funding for extracurricular activities and resources that in turn encourage healthy self image. The City of Tempe could promote the benefits of tax credit donations to schools and provide information on how to make a donation, through the City's water bill.

<u>Teen Healthy Self Image – 2</u>

Facilitators: Alex Jovanovic City of Tempe – Community Services

Enrico Lage Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Youth Participants

Holly Berns Kyrene Middle School
Tyonnie Fisher Tempe High School

Jolina Mejia New School for the Arts & Academics

Kailah Preble Gililland Middle School
Ferris Saad McClintock High School
Caroline Tate Corona del Sol High School
Precious Wilson Marcos de Niza High School

Adult Participants

Latasha Hamptom Tempe Police Dept.-Juvenile Unit Stephanie Harbour Compadre High School-APPP

Elena Hernandez Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dept.

Zita Johnson TUHSD Governing Board
Nancy Rodriguez Tempe Municipal Court
Leah Sergeant City of Tempe – Kid Zone

School Transitions and Career Planning—1

Discussion Summary:

Our group began by discussing some of the issues that middle and high school students face around school transitions. The group identified many factor which complicate transition periods, including drugs, bullying, peer pressure, pressure to have sex, pressure to get good grades, feeling rushed to make class choices, and juggling school with sports, clubs and other activities. The group also identified two main periods of transition: the transition from middle school to high school and the transition from high school to whatever comes next. These issues were discussed separately in terms of the problems and resources available at those junctures. Discussion then addressed the potential consequences of not successfully navigating transition periods. These possibilities can be very serious and include dropping out of school, depression and suicide, pregnancy, and involvement in other harmful activities. Youth participants felt there was not enough information and resources (programs and people) available to them to help with transitions, especially for the transition from high school to the "real world." The group agreed that students need more information on their potential futures and it needs to begin early in their education and occur on a consistent and frequent basis.

Recommendations:

1. Provide weekly school sessions on the outcomes of choices.

Weekly, age appropriate sessions beginning in 4th grade on the outcomes of choices around drugs, sex, partying, and other risky options could be provided to assist students to successfully navigate transition periods. Sessions should focus on building relationships by having a variety of people speak to students including those who have made bad choices (such as Not My Kid), older peers, and trusted school staff. Youth emphasized that the messages need to occur often and regularly.

2. Increase job preparation in the schools for all students.

High schools could include resume writing in the freshman and sophomore English curriculum, hold a career day every year at each school, and offer activities which familiarize students with the employment process.

3. Increase awareness of existing programs.

Participants felt that many students and parents aren't aware of available resources and programs. The city could partner with the schools to help increase awareness of programs such as DECA and JAG through the city water bill, website and Channel 11.

4. Provide workshops that promote employment and college entry.

Classes on job interviewing could be held. Special workshops on getting into college and job hunting could also be offered. These classes and workshops could be provided by community organizations in partnership with the schools.

School Transitions & Career Planning - 1

Facilitators: Lynette Stonefeld Communities in Schools

Nick Gaitan Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Youth Participants

Allyson Atkinson McKemy Middle School
Gabrielle Butler Compadre High School
Pablo DeLeon Corona del Sol High School

Destiny Hillis Tempe High School
Taylor Homes Kyrene Middle School
Julio Romero Escalante Teen Leadership

Demetreus Smith Tempe High School

Adult Participants

Mary Lou Taylor TUHSD Governing Board

Susan Voirol Tempe Union High School District

Rochelle Wells TESD Governing Board

School Transitions and Career Planning - 2

Discussion Summary:

Our group began by discussing the challenges teens face when transitioning from middle school to high school and from high school to beyond. These challenges include pressure to succeed academically, peer pressure, bullying, college pressure, concerns about failure, not enough information on what classes to take, and differences between honors classes and non-honors classes. Teens in the group stated they experience a constant struggle to enjoy their high school years amidst the pressure to take difficult classes in order to be accepted by colleges and receive scholarships. Teens felt that many parents are not informed about what teens face when moving from middle school to high school and from high school to beyond. Parents may not be aware of what resources are available to them to better guide their teen's choices. Group participants agreed that if parents are not involved teens have a more difficult time making decisions about classes and planning for the future. School guidance counselors were identified are being very helpful, and are able to influence high school plans, however participants felt group information sessions can be too rushed and can be intimidating to middle school students getting ready to go into high school. Overall the group felt that more communication about resources available to parents and students is needed.

Recommendations:

1. Provide parent education on school transitions.

Parents unfamiliar with the choices teens face in choosing classes, a course of study, and finally applying to colleges may be intimidated by the process. Parent education programs offered in English and Spanish could be provided to help them understand how to support and guide their teen. This could be provided by community agencies in partnership with schools.

2. Provide a peer shadowing program at the high schools to assist middle school students in making the transition to high school.

Students reported that a lack of knowledge about what choices they face in high school makes the transition more difficult. Peers could help them feel more comfortable, and give them information and practical advice. This could occur through student organizations and clubs on campus and could be offered to 8th grade students either as a group activity or one-on-one.

3. Provide a career shadowing program for high school students.

Group participants felt teens were lacking in real world knowledge. Time spent shadowing a professional in a career they are interested in would give them the information needed to help shape their future decisions. Representatives from the business community, school district, City, and the Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission could be involved in forming a planning committee to develop career shadowing opportunities.

4. Provide individualized orientations for middle school students.

Students felt that information on high school classes and schedules should be provided at the beginning of 8th grade instead of later in the year. Students also felt they did not get enough attention when information on high school was presented in a large group setting. The model of developing individualized class plans used by Peggy Payne Academy could be adapted for students who might need the extra assistance.

School Transitions & Career Planning – 2

Facilitators: Peggy Goldberg
Sachin Nair
City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Youth Participants

Deánna Burrell

Darien Hoang

Corona del Sol High School

McClintock High School

McClintock High School

McClintock High School

Kyrene Middle School

McKenzie Mosley

New School for the Arts &

Academics

Jessica Schulke Tempe High School
Kaycee Torres Gililland Middle School
Ujwala Vaka Corona del Sol High School
Brittany Wright Escalante Teen Leadership

Adult Participants

Rindy Corn Maricopa County Juvenile Probation

Dept.

Kim Hilgers McClintock High School

Linda Littell Tempe Union High School District

Discussion Summary:

Our group began by discussing the reasons teens abuse prescription drugs. Thoughts about this included self-medication, boredom, other drug use, to "be cool," to "fit in," peer pressure and the misperception that it is safer to abuse prescription drugs than alcohol and other drugs. The group agreed that teens and parents either have no knowledge of prescription drug abuse or if they have knowledge of it they have a lack of understanding of its severe consequences. These consequences can include depression, psychosis, addiction, overdose, and death. Participants felt that in general prescription drugs are perceived as safer to abuse than illegal drugs. The group was in consensus that there is a need to educate teens, parents and the community-at-large about prescription drug abuse. The group also felt that prevention programming focusing specifically on prescription drug abuse is needed.

Recommendations:

2. Provide peer education on teen prescription drug use.

Youth or young adults could speak in small or large groups in school settings about their first-hand experiences with prescription drug abuse. Speakers from "Not My Kid," or youth identified by the Juvenile Probation Department could be utilized as speakers. Youth participants felt presentations by teens and young adults who have been personally affected by prescription drug use would make a greater impact on students then counselors and substance abuse professionals.

2. Increase parent awareness of the prevalence of teen prescription drug abuse and its consequences.

Students suggested using already established communication outlets such as school newsletters and websites, the city water bill inserts, and email blasts to inform parents and other adults about the serious dangers of prescription drug abuse.

3. Establish prescription drug abuse website links on school and city web pages.

Links to websites that provide information on prescription drug abuse and provide resources and referral to local agencies could be established on the City's and schools' websites. Ideally, an interactive, teen-led website created by student information technology groups could be created.

Facilitators: Tricia Gilman City of Tempe – Community Services
Veekas Shrivastava Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Youth Participants

Kaswana Johnson Tempe High School Compadre High School Malik Lowery Samantha Lue Corona del Sol High School Corona del Sol High School Lauren Milovich Tara Mulligan Kyrene Middle School Andrew Salazar Escalante Teen Leadership Raymond Tan McClintock High School Eva Terrazas Tempe High School

Adult Participants

Brandon Banks
Tempe Police Dept. – Juvenile Unit
Barbara Miller
Andrew Rodriguez
Tempe Police Dept. – Crime

Prevention

Discussion Summary:

Our group began by discussing their knowledge of teen prescription drug abuse and their beliefs about the scope of the problem. The group acknowledged that though they had little or no first-hand experience with the illegal use of prescription drugs they felt it was a major issue facing teens today. Group members believed teens use prescription drugs because they are readily available in homes and that parents have no idea the source of drugs might come from their own medicine cabinets. Participants felt teens might be more willing to take prescription drugs because of their easy availability, a perception they are safer than street drugs, low or no financial cost, and less stigma by obtaining it through friends or family as opposed to buying from a "dealer." Some participants noted reasons for use by teens include pressure from peers to use, stress, desire to fit in at parties and the breakdown of family and community connections. It was interesting that teen participant's perception of teen prescription drug use ranged from 35-76%, while adult perceptions mirrored the actual figure of 20%.

Recommendations;

1. Provide an educational program on the illegal use of prescription drugs.

The high school district in partnership with substance abuse prevention agencies could create and implement a parent and student education program that could be offered at the high schools or included in the No Parent Left Behind workshop series. Providing this valuable resource would help educate parents and teens about the problems and issues of illegal prescription drug use.

2. Implement a public information campaign to promote awareness of the illegal use of prescription medications.

Substance abuse prevention agencies and the City could spread an anti-prescription drug abuse message to a wide and varied population by utilizing various forms of media including billboards, bus stop/light rail advertisements, radio and television announcements, short blurbs in movie theaters, the water bill, and information on the City webpage.

3. Provide diverse presentations on prescription drug abuse at local community centers and other City outlets.

Dependent upon the services and programs they provide community centers can draw a diverse population of youth and adults to their locations. The community centers in partnership with substance abuse prevention agencies could provide age appropriate and culturally competent presentations on prescription drug use and abuse for specific

populations. For example, teens could present to a teen group and a Spanish-speaking presenter could provide information to Spanish-speaking attendees.

Facilitators: Mickie Berry City of Tempe – Community Services

Preston Long Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Youth Participants

Alejandra Dubois Compadre High School Pablo Gonzalez Escalante Teen Leadership

Tommy Kim Tempe High School

Alexis Martin New School for the Arts & Academics

Rahud Prasai McClintock High School
David Reynolds McClintock High School
Jasmine Warner Gililland Middle School

Adult Participants

Jon Evans Tempe Police Dept.-Juvenile Unit

Denise Lopez Magellan Health Services

Karla Quinones Southwest Behavioral Services

Isaac Salcido Chicanos Por La Causa

Mark Wertsching Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dep

The Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission would like to extend a special thanks to the East Valley Boys and Girls Club - Tempe/Ladmo Branch. Their assistance in hosting this year's Youth Town Hall at the Westside Community Center contributed to the event's success.